

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

The Official Action sets forth an objection to the drawing figures because they do not illustrate the vehicle door and inside handle. Submitted with this Amendment are replacement sheets of drawing figures, including amended versions of Figs. 1 and 2. Fig. 1 has been amended to generally illustrate the vehicle door 100 while Fig. 2 has been amended to schematically illustrate the inside handle 110. The specification has also been amended to refer to these reference numbers. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the drawing is respectfully requested.

With respect to the request that Fig. 11 be labeled as "Prior Art," it is noted that Fig. 11 as originally submitted is identified with the label "Known Work." It is believed that this designation should be adequate. In the event the Examiner would prefer a different designation such as the "Prior Art" label mentioned in the Official Action, the Examiner is kindly asked to contact the undersigned.

The claims at issue in this application are directed to a door lock device comprising a latch mechanism, a lift lever, an open lever, a lock lever, and an open member. The latch mechanism is provided at the vehicle door and is engageable with or disengageable from a striker provided at the vehicle body. The lift lever operates the latch mechanism from an engaged state in which the latch mechanism engages the striker to a disengaged state in which the latch mechanism disengages from the striker. The open lever is operated through operation of a door opening mechanism provided at the vehicle door, and the lock lever is movable between an unlocked position and a locked position by operation of a door locking/unlocking

member provided at the vehicle door. The open member is operated with the lock lever and is movable between an unlocked position and a locked position. The open member comprises a link member having an operation input portion which receives an operation force from the open lever and an acting portion engageable with the lift lever. The open member also comprises an elastic member connecting the link member and the lock lever. When the open member is in the unlocked position, the open member engages the lift lever in one direction through operation of the open lever to allow operation of the lift lever. When the operation member is in the locked position, the open member idly engages the lift lever upon operation of the open lever and then becomes engaged with the lift lever in another direction to prohibit operation of the lift lever when the open member is switched to the unlocked position from the locked position.

The top of page three of the Official Action raises a concern regarding the wording in the last portion of Claim 1. In particular, the Official Action indicates that it is not clear how the lift lever is prohibited from moving in the unlocked position. It appears that perhaps there may be a misunderstanding regarding this portion of the claim wording.

The wording in the latter portion of Claim 1 recites that when the open member is in the locked position, the open member idly engages the lift lever through operation of the open lever and then becomes engaged with the lift lever in the other direction to prohibit operation of the lift lever when the open member is switched to the unlocked position from the locked position. This wording is consistent with the description at various places in the application. For example, the discussion beginning on page 18 of the application generally describes that when the

open member is in the locked position, the operation of the open lever causes the open member to idly engage the lift lever so that operation of the open lever does not result in operation of the lift lever. Then, when the open member is switched to the unlocked position from the locked position, the open member engages the lift lever to prohibit operation of the lift lever. Thus, even though the open member is switched to the unlocked position from the locked position, the engagement of the open member with the lift lever does not result in operation of the lift lever.

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the wording in independent Claim 1 is accurate and consistent with the written description. If the undersigned has not fully understood the Examiner's concern, the Examiner is kindly asked to call the undersigned to discuss the matter in more detail.

Appreciation is expressed to Examiner Walsh for the indication that Claims 2-14 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Thus, the only claim currently at issue is independent Claim 1. This claim has been rejected based on the disclosure contained in U.S. Patent 6,511,106 to *Perkins et al.* This document discloses a vehicle door latch that includes a latch mechanism comprised of a forkbolt 24 and a cooperating detent 26. The door latch device also includes a lock lever 56 defined by a lower lock lever 82, an upper lock lever 84 and a compression spring 86 disposed between the upper and lower lock levers 84, 82. The elastic member 86 biases the upper lock lever 84 relative to the lower lock 82. Further, an intermittent lever 46 is pivotally connected to one end of an unlatching lever 44. The intermittent lever 46 is provided with a pin 54 positioned in a slot of the composite lock lever 56.

The Official Action observes that the elastic member 86 disclosed in *Perkins et al.* corresponds to the claimed elastic member of the open member recited in independent Claim 1. The Official Action also interprets the lock lever 56 disclosed in *Perkins et al.* as corresponding to the claimed lock lever and interprets the intermittent lever 46 disclosed in *Perkins et al.* as corresponding to the claimed open member. However, the claimed elastic member recited in independent Claim 1 is quite different from the compression spring 86 disclosed in *Perkins et al.* As recited in Claim 1, the elastic member connects the lock lever and the link member of the open member. In *Perkins et al.*, the compression spring 86 does not connect the lock lever 56 to the intermittent lever 46.

To further clarify the distinction between the elastic member used here and the compression spring described in *Perkins et al.*, Claim 1 has been amended to recite the automatic engagement performed by the elastic member. That is, Claim 1 recites that when the open member is in the locked position, the open member idly engages with the lift lever by the operation of the open lever and then automatically engages the lift lever in the other direction by the biasing force of the elastic member to prohibit the operation of the lift lever when the open member is switched to the unlocked position from the locked position. The compression spring 86 disclosed in *Perkins et al.* does not cause the intermittent member 46 (open member) to automatically engage the detent 26 (lift lever) when the open member is switched to the unlocked position from the locked position to prohibit operation of the detent 26.

In light of at least the foregoing differences, it is respectfully submitted that the door lock device recited in independent Claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over

the disclosure contained in *Perkins et al.* Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of the record and allowance of this application are earnestly solicited.

Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application, the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Submitted with this Amendment are 11 sheets of replacement drawing figures, including Figs. 1-11. These replacement sheets of drawing figures are to replace all 11 sheets of drawing figures originally submitted with this application, including Figs. 1-11. The replacement sheets of drawing figures include changes to Figs. 1 and 2 involving adding a general illustration of the vehicle door 100 in Fig. 1 and adding a schematic illustration of the inside handle 110 in Fig. 2.

Replacement Sheets